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25 May 1951

Copy No. 25

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INTELLIGENCE MEMORANDUM

Doc. No. 10

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No. *20 July 78*

Document No.	<i>10</i>
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Class. Changed To:	<i>TS S C</i>
Auth:	<i>HR 70-2</i>
Date:	
By:	

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Intelligence Memorandum

Subject: The Japanese Local Elections

Conservative candidates identified with the peace treaty policies of Prime Minister Yoshida's Liberal Party scored a sweeping victory in the recent Japanese local elections. City, town and village mayors and assemblymen were elected on 23 April, while prefectural governors and assemblymen were chosen on 30 April, in the first nationwide local elections since 1947. According to unofficial tabulations of the 30 April vote, the conservative Liberal Party garnered 38% of the total, Independents (mostly conservatives) 30%, Socialists 15%, the conservative Democrats 10%, and Communists 0.9%. The vote of 23 April, while not available percentagewise, likewise showed a strong conservative trend.

Traditionally, local elections in Japan are decided on purely local issues, with the personality and influence of the candidate playing a dominant role. This is especially true of town and village elections, in which in many cases local bosses control the vote. Consequently, the extent to which the national issues identified with the various political parties played a significant part in the results of the recent elections cannot be clearly defined. It should be noted, however, that the national political parties (1) took an unusually active part in these elections and (2) interjected the peace treaty controversy as the major issue at an early date. Moreover, as reflected by the record turnout, the imminence of the peace treaty and the importance to Japan of the issues involved unquestionably had aroused unusual public interest.

Essentially, the foreign policy platform of Yoshida's Liberal Party, with which the opposition Democrats are in accord, supports a "majority" peace--with all those nations willing to sign--plus cooperation with the US in Japan's defense and in the Western economic effort. The Socialist three-point peace policy favors an "over-all" peace--including the Communist nations--neutrality, and opposition to US bases. It appears that the final vote did, in fact, reject the Socialist neutrality platform and at least indirectly supported Yoshida's pro-US program. This conclusion is supported by the strong Conservative vote in the large urban centers and in the gubernatorial contests, where national issues are more likely to be considered by the voters. Japanese press analysts almost unanimously express a similar interpretation, as evidenced

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by the following typical press comments in Tokyo dailies:

Yomiuri. "The poor showing of both the Socialist and Communist parties...attests to the people's recognition that neutrality and non-defense are not safeguards against Communist aggression. Unpopularity of the Socialists' three-point peace principle was borne out by the defeat of Socialist candidates in major cities."

Nippon Times. "Socialist interjection of the peace issue (into the campaign) boomeranged to their detriment."

Mainichi. "Overwhelming public support for an early peace was graphically indicated by the victory of the conservatives and the conspicuous retreat of the Japan Communist Party. The US draft peace plan for Japan has won popular acclaim."

Tokyo Shimbun. "The Socialist Party's defeat can be blamed on its three peace principles, and indirectly on its crude political tactics."

Jiji Shimpō. "The Socialist defeat indicates the people's antipathy toward the party's unrealistic peace policies."

US Political Advisor Sebald, in commenting on the results of the 23 April elections, stated his belief that the Socialist defeat represented primarily a rejection by the public of the Socialist peace principles, rather than a blanket endorsement of the Conservative parties.

In analyzing the results of the election in terms of the 2,616 prefectural assembly seats up for election, Kyodo Press Agency states that some 80% of the seats were won by conservatives (41% Liberals, 11% Democrats, and the balance conservative Independents).

The Liberal Party has interpreted the victory as a clear-cut mandate for proceeding with its peace treaty plans and its pro-Western alignment. Yoshida, in commenting on the 23 April election results, stated that the Japanese want a "realistic peace...that is, an early treaty under terms already outlined by the US." He is supported by Secretary General Miki of the Democratic Party, who has pledged full cooperation with the Liberal Party on the peace treaty, contending that the elections showed clearly that the people want the Yoshida Cabinet to handle the peace settlement. Miki adds, however, that the Diet should be dissolved and a general election held prior to the treaty's ratification.

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Yoshida's post-election statements indicate that he still favors a "go-slow" policy on the question of rearmament.

The Socialist Party reportedly lost two million votes in the prefectural elections as compared with the 1950 Upper House elections. Despite the defeat, which the Socialists blame upon the "reactionary turn of the objective situation" (an oblique reference to the indirect effect of Ambassador Dulles' speech and press conference prior to the elections) and the lack of time to propagate the Socialist three-point peace policy among the electorate, Secretary General Asanuma has recently announced that there will be no change in the party's foreign policy. The right wing of the party, which favors considerable modification of the peace principles, has been outnumbered heretofore by the predominant left wing. Should the right wing now be unable to achieve a change in policy as a result of the elections, the possibility of a split between the two wings is increased.

The Japanese Communist Party was less successful than in any previous postwar election, failing to elect a single mayoralty candidate and losing its eighteen incumbent mayors. The party's total of only 0.9% of the vote stands out in sharp contrast to its 9.8% vote in the January 1949 Diet elections. The majority "centrist" faction, apparently anticipating defeat, chose to support many Socialist candidates whose platforms paralleled its own rather than to run rival candidates. The minority "internationalist" faction considered this an "opportunistic" policy and ran a rival list of candidates for some posts, which further weakened the overall Communist effort. The election campaign actions of the two factions apparently revived their differences, which had been relatively dormant for several months. Tokyo Shimbun of 26 April reports that the minority group has made plans for establishing competing publications and for seizing control of the central committee, suggesting that it may now be beyond the power of the Japanese Communist factions to effect a reconciliation.

The outcome of the elections appears to assure continuing liberal control of the government at least until the general elections scheduled for January 1953. It is improbable that Yoshida will now accede to Opposition demands for a new general election prior to the peace treaty. There is a possibility that a large-scale depurge of wartime leaders, which rumors indicate may take place next month, might inject sufficient pressure upon

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the government to force new Diet elections prior to 1953. A de-purge would, however, further enhance the position of the conservative parties. In the event a special general election is called after the treaty is signed, it appears now that neither the Socialists nor the Democrats would be able to recover their strength in the near future sufficiently to overcome the Liberal Party unless the treaty terms were so unfavorable as to react against the government in power. It seems even more improbable that the Socialists could overcome the combined strength of the Liberals and the Democrats, both of whom have almost identical, pro-US foreign policies.

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